

**- Event Advisory -**

**WHAT: Release of USCIRF Policy Focus Turkmenistan**

**WHEN: Tuesday, Dec. 18, 2007, 10-11:30 a.m.**

**WHERE: Reid Ballroom, Heldref Publications, 1319 18th Street, NW, Washington, DC**

**RSVP:** [communications@uscirf.gov](mailto:communications@uscirf.gov) or 523-3240, ext. 114

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE  
Dec. 12, 2007

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The United States Commission on International Religious Freedom and Freedom House are co-hosting a presentation by Commission Chair Michael Cromartie and Commissioner Don Argue of the Commission's latest Policy Focus, on Turkmenistan, which is based on a Commission delegation trip in August 2007. The Commission delegation was the first group of official U.S. visitors to focus on human rights in Turkmenistan following the death of dictator Saparmurat Niyazov. The presentation will be followed by a roundtable discussion on the state of religious freedom and related human rights in the Central Asian nation. Jeff Goldstein, Freedom House's Senior Manager for Central Asia programs, will comment.

While in Turkmenistan, the Commission delegation looked at the status of freedom of thought, conscience, and religion or belief. It found that despite some modest changes, significant religious freedom problems persist and official harassment is continuing under the new government of President Gurbanguly Berdimuhamedov. In some regions, the Commission delegation learned, certain religious freedom conditions may be deteriorating.

**The U.S. Commission on International Religious Freedom** was created by the International Religious Freedom Act of 1998 to monitor the status of freedom of thought, conscience, and religion or belief abroad, as defined in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and related international instruments, and to give independent policy recommendations to the President, the Secretary of State and the Congress.

Michael Cromartie

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